Once I got him to plant his feet on the floor beside the bed I'd nearly won. If I relented he still might go back to bed. Many mornings I'd got him medicated, out of bed, dressed and cigaretted to go to the asylum for bloodwork. He'd take the cigarette I offered him at the office door, promising to go as soon as he'd smoked it in the first floor lounge. I wouldn't see him leave, but hours later I'd assume he must have gone and come back. I'd look for him to give him his afternoon meds and find him sound asleep in bed, still clenching his bus fare in a sweaty fist.

After he put his feet on the floor I'd find him a towel, a bathrobe, and (if I were lucky) some clean clothes. Usually everything was dirty. His socks would be crumpled up like balls of paper. The dirtiest pairs were crusty and hard like salt-damaged shoe-leather. His underwear had piss and shit stains on it. His closet was so jammed full of clothing that you had to tug and yank at anything to remove it. Most of the clothing was dirty. What wasn't dirty was unsuitable. Gabriel had either grown too fat for it or it was designed for some purpose or occasion that never arose in the House. I'd usually find an old pair of jeans under bags of laundry at the bottom of his closet. Something would be wrong with them. They'd have a bib or be too tight. They'd be for a woman. I'd tell him I was going downstairs but would be back in five minutes to make sure he was in the shower.